

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE
OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from California (Mr. TED LIEU) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, the collapse of TrumpCare in the Senate shows that we need a new way. The process from the very beginning was fatally flawed. The plan was really behind closed doors. There were no hearings. No witnesses, no doctors, no insurance plans, no patients, no nurses, nobody could testify in front of Congress and let people know about the current healthcare system.

I am not ObamaCare. I am willing to work with Republicans, with the President, with Democrats to update and improve ObamaCare. Any law can be made better, but to repeal ObamaCare without a plan is a really stupid way to go about it, and to repeal it with an even worse plan known as TrumpCare is an even more stupid way to go about it.

The version that the House passed was going to cause 23 million people to lose their health insurance, increase premiums in 2018 and 2020, and then take people with preexisting conditions and give them enormously higher costs. No wonder the Senate killed that version.

Now we are in a position where the Republicans, instead of trying four, five, six, seven, eight different versions of TrumpCare, they should do the one thing they haven't yet tried, which is bipartisanship.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlemen from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGRO), who will make some comments as well.

Mr. GALLEGRO. Mr. Speaker, first of all, my experience with the Affordable Care Act actually comes from the State legislature, where, in a bipartisan manner, the Republican governor joined with the minority Democrats and a handful of Republicans in the Senate State House to pass Medicaid expansion.

Why did we do that?

If you looked at what was happening in Arizona, it was some of the Trump areas, as I like to call them, these rural districts where the rural hospitals, which are not only the medically necessary infrastructure of the area but also the economic drivers, the only high-wage employers in the area, they were about to shut down.

There was so much uncompensated cost, because people were using the emergency room as their primary care doctor, that these hospitals were starting to have to charge more and insurance companies were starting to refuse to pay more for their premiums, that they needed to respond to that.

In the end, what we started hearing from these hospitals is that we are going to have to shut down the emergency room, and if you have an emergency, we are going to have to heli-

copter you either to Tucson or Phoenix.

Now, for many of you guys who are not Southwesterners like us in the Southwest, we have a lot of territory and a lot of land. For you to just drive to Phoenix for emergency care would be pretty insane, let alone the expense of helicoptering into Phoenix was even more so than that.

Because we had the goal of actually increasing and improving our healthcare outcomes, we worked again in a bipartisan manner with Governor Brewer, with Republicans and Democrats to pass one of the most comprehensive Medicaid expansion bills in the country that has actually turned around, lowered costs, created better healthcare outcomes, and has now insured more than 400,000 poor Arizonans that did not have it before, including people in the disability community, as well as children.

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To counteract what we saw today, if it wasn't really for the bravery of Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator COLLINS, and Senator MCCAIN, as well as all of the Senate Democrats, what we would have seen would have been a bill that would not only have just rolled back the millions of people who are now covered with health insurance, but it would also have been detrimental to the people who currently have even private health insurance.

Premiums were going to go up for everybody. The estimated amount of people just on the so-called skinny bill that were going to lose health insurance would be 16 million people, and on the House bill it was going to be 23 million people, in addition to the essential gutting of Medicaid, all for giving a tax cut to the top 1 percent.

Now, this is bad policy, but it is worse policy when you don't have an open process to it, when you seek it through the middle of the night, hoping that the American public is just going to accept what comes out.

There is a reason why TrumpCare was polling less than Congress, and trust me, it is very difficult to poll less than Congress. At this point, it is just our families that like us.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. I like you.

Mr. GALLEGRO. I like you, too, TED. You are a good man.

But the fact that we the American public knew so little, just knew enough, and said this bill is bad and were able to come out and put pressure on our Senators and our Members of Congress with public hearings and townhalls was key to stopping this.

Lastly, before I move back to TED, if you are so proud of this bill, if you are the Senate Republicans and you are so proud of this bill, if you are Donald Trump and you are so proud of this bill, even our House colleagues, why didn't you have consistent townhalls? Why didn't you go out there and explain to people what you were planning

to do and why this is better for America?

Instead, they tried to hide it. They tried to move it as fast as possible, and then tried to schedule a vote in the middle of the night. If you have to vote for something in the middle of the night, it means you are not very confident and you are not very proud of that bill.

So what is the solution now? Nobody in the Democratic Caucus thinks the Affordable Care Act—or ObamaCare, as some people call it—is the be-all and end-all. We don't think it is perfect. We certainly think that there is a great bipartisan approach we can take to make it better. And what I mean by "better" is more coverage, lower premiums, and better healthcare outcomes.

When I use those words, those were almost exactly, word for word, what Donald Trump said he wanted to see happen when he was going to replace the Affordable Care Act.

But, point by point, whether it was the bill that came through the House or the bill that came through the Senate, none of those would have even fit Donald Trump's mandate. Which is why, at the end of the day, that bill was radioactive. Nobody liked it, and they had to hide it.

So what we should do is follow the advice of Senator MCCAIN in Arizona, follow the example of Senators MURKOWSKI and COLLINS and all of the Senate Democrats: get back to regular order and work out an actual fix to the Affordable Care Act and get Americans more coverage, lower premiums, and better healthcare outcomes.

I say that also as someone who is on an ObamaCare plan. I am not exempt from it, and neither is Mr. LIEU. We are in it just as much as everyone else is, and we want to see it fixed.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, Representative GALLEGRO and I both served on Active Duty in the United States military. Before we could do that, we had to take an oath to the Constitution. That is the same oath that Members of Congress take, and it is also an oath that members of the executive branch take.

Under the Constitution, Congress passes the laws. ObamaCare is the law of the land. Under the Constitution, the President has a duty to enforce those laws.

Today, the President tweeted that he wants ObamaCare to implode. Not only is that mean, mean, mean, it is also a dereliction of duty. The job of the President is to help Americans, not hurt millions of Americans out of spite.

Let me give you an example of what it was like before ObamaCare.

I was at a restaurant and a waitress came up to me. She knew I was a legislator. I was in the State legislature at the time, and she wanted help. Her daughter had just turned 18, and, in California, where I am from, you cannot get government health insurance if you don't have any minor children. So

she lost her government health insurance.

She was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. She tried to get private insurance. None of them would cover her. And I realized that she is now going to slowly die because she could not get health insurance coverage.

She could not go into an emergency room and get treatment because her breast cancer had not progressed to that point. But one day she is going to get to that point. She will go to an emergency room; she will get treated for a few days; and then she will die. And I thought, in a country as great as America, that should never be happening.

Now that the Affordable Care Act is the law of the land, you cannot be discriminated against because of your pre-existing conditions. There are some incredibly amazing elements of this law. That is why the Republicans could not repeal it. Because the American people, after looking at it for 7 years, the majority said, you know, this is a pretty good deal. Is it the best deal? No. We could definitely make it better.

Mr. Speaker, Representative GALLEGO and I are offering to the Republicans and Speaker RYAN to engage in bipartisanship. The one thing we are asking the Speaker to do is to not enable the President to sabotage the Affordable Care Act. Not only is that wrong, but it would be enabling his dereliction of duty, and it will cause millions of Americans to suffer greatly just out of spite.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGO).

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, if you want to hear some ideas—and I think it is important that instead of just us knocking what was introduced, we could also give some ideas—certainly, for me, and I think I am also speaking for TED LIEU, we would prefer to have Medicare for all, so people have a stable insurance, a system that we know works, a system that actually brings down costs. But if we can't do that, there are many things we can do in the meantime.

Why not drop the age of Medicare eligibility to 55? If you do that, you are going to also decrease premiums for people who are not on Medicare, people who are just buying private health insurance. You could be on Medicare at 55 and still be working.

What about for those counties that don't have private insurers on the subsidized market? They should be able to buy into the Federal health insurance plans of all of the workers who live in those districts, or buy into the plans that TED and I have. Why can't we let them do that?

Why not cover every U.S. citizen up until the age of 18 under Medicaid to relieve the parents of that burden?

We can also start looking at community health centers, reinforcing those to make sure that we are taking the poorest of the poor who actually cost the most when it comes to healthcare

costs and, instead of forcing them into a hospital or into a primary care situation, they could get consistent care without putting a burden on the overall medical system.

There are tons of ideas that we could be working on with our colleagues that will, again, fulfill President Trump's goal of lower costs, lower premiums, and better healthcare outcomes. So this doesn't have to be a static situation. This doesn't have to be an either/or.

President Trump is making it sound like, because we did not pass his idea of reform, we must collapse the whole system. That is unnecessary, that is irresponsible, and that is not how adult people that legislate act.

You can fix this. We can fix this so more people can have healthcare coverage, more people can have that security that they are going to always have health insurance so they can go and start a business and know they are going to have health insurance, know that they can send their kid to college and they are still going to have health insurance, know that they can retire knowing that they have been healthy the whole time and they are going to have a good, dignified retirement because we had made sure that we established a good healthcare system from the time they were born until the time they retire.

This is possible. This is possible.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the House of Representatives is going to go on recess in August. Now is the time for millions of people across America to contact their Member, ask them to hold townhalls, ask them to explain their vote on the awful TrumpCare legislation that passed the House, and ask them to now work with Democrats and work on a bipartisan basis to improve ObamaCare. Now is the time for millions of Americans to speak up. They have the entire month of August to contact their Member of Congress, and I urge them to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGO).

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, lastly, I will close with this. If you were one of those Members of Congress, if you are a Republican Senator or a Republican Member of Congress who voted to gut the Affordable Care Act, there is time. There is a way to come back from that really bad decision. You can turn around and start working for the betterment of this country by trying to fix the Affordable Care Act.

The American public will look kindly upon those legislators who are here to work in a bipartisan manner to, again, lower costs, lower premiums, and provide more coverage and better healthcare outcomes. There is time to do this. But there is not time for more opportunities to gut this, for more time to kick people off Medicaid, or for more time to create some kind of situation that is only go to raise premiums.

If we allow Trump to actually, in his words, make the whole thing fail, it is not ObamaCare that fails, it is not the Affordable Care Act that fails—it is the American people that fail. He is playing a game with the lives of the American people.

What he is going to do is he is going to cause millions of people to either lose their insurance because insurance companies are going to have to start shedding people, or premiums are going to end up going up because, if he creates instability in the market, these insurance companies are going to try to recoup their costs somehow, and it is going to discourage younger individuals from actually coming on and buying into the ObamaCare insurance pool, which, again, will raise premiums. This is unnecessary.

Mr. Speaker, for those Members of Congress and those Senators who want to work with us, the first step is to encourage and stop the President from sabotaging the Affordable Care Act and to work diligently in a bipartisan manner to fix the Affordable Care Act and cover more people.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO LEBANON—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 115-59)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days of the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Lebanon that was declared in Executive Order 13441 of August 1, 2007, is to continue in effect beyond August 1, 2017.

Certain ongoing activities, such as continuing arms transfers to Hizballah that include increasingly sophisticated weapons systems, undermine Lebanese sovereignty, contribute to political and economic instability in the region, and continue to constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have